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## Part of the fun of being the editor

of this publication is that you get to view a number of diverse and interesting articles. You also get the satisfaction of reviewing works by old friends as well as new up-and-coming scholars. Such is again the case in this volume.

Friend, scholar, colleague, and now associate, Fred Holabird introduces us to a burgeoning field and a new numismatic term, "Pioneer Minor Coinage", in his lead article on Collecting Western Pioneer Minor Coinage. He concludes with suggested ways of collecting these fascinating, and relatively inexpensive, artifacts.



A subject seldom broached in Western numismatics is the role of women during the Gold Rushes. Patricia Marcello gives us a quick overview of these unsung Pioneer heroines. Our erstwhile contributor Dr. Robert Chandler continues his narrative of Gold as a Cumbersome Curmudgeonly Commodity in Part IV which details refining and assaying techniques.

Of particular excitement for me is first time contributor William Robins' article about Pike's Peak Prospecting. Will, the winner of last year's ANA exhibit award for Best in Class for his Clark Gruber and Company display, offers another well researched article on a related field. A graduate of the ANA Pioneer Gold and Western Assay Ingot summer seminar, Will's interesting articles belie his only 14 chronological years.

Another Pioneer Gold seminar graduate and enthusiast, Charlie Black submitted a related journal from the Colorado gold mines.

On a personally sad note, we will miss Frederick Mayer, who passed away in February. He was a very kind and generous man who readily opened up his home and collections for numismatists, philatelists and other scholars and enthusiasts. Just last August he held a party celebrating the opening of his new gallery which displayed his Colorado collection during the ANA convention in Denver. He will be missed.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Don". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and a trailing "on".

# Field Guide to Collecting Western Pioneer Minor Coinage

## Also known as Trade Tokens

An Introduction to  
Collecting Western Pioneer Minor Coinage

By Fred N. Holabird

### Introduction

Collecting Pioneer coins has always been a popular topic. Collecting interests over the years have focused on pioneer gold coins. Indeed, these exciting gold remnants of the California gold rush (and others) have evolved into a collecting field unto itself. With the discovery of the SS Central America, an additional several hundred coins were put into the collecting marketplace and gobbled up immediately. Collectors have looked for more, not knowing where to look until now.

Today, by the consolidation of several collecting fields coupled with new research into American coinage, we have come to understand more about the pioneer coinage produced in America. From the days of privately minted California gold coins made because of a serious coin shortage on the west coast, emerged another form of pioneer coinage, the minor coins, now known as "trade tokens" or "storecards." The term "minor coinage" is the U.S. Mint's technical term applied to all American silver coinage of value less than \$1.00. The term "token" was applied to those coins without intrinsic value from silver and gold, such as pennies and nickels.

### Coin Shortage - Pioneer Money Evolves

Trade tokens are a direct result of the same problem that created California gold coins. There was insufficient coinage on the west coast during the California gold rush.

While thousands migrated to California and the west in the 1850's, coinage, both major in the form of silver dollars and gold coins, as well as the minor coinage — pennies, nickels, etc., did not. This left

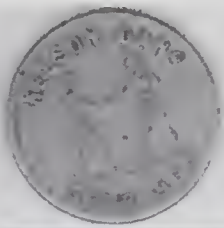
a huge void that the government was slow to recognize, and even slower to act upon.

The west did not stop growing after the initial ten year burst during the 1850's. This era was the most important financial era in the history of the United States. During the 1850's, California produced \$50 million in gold each year. That's \$50 million in new money into the American economy, an unprecedented amount.

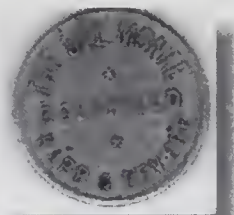
The production of gold from California increased the known gold in the world by magnanimous proportions. In turn, it increased the American money supply in an unprecedented manner, such that the possible demonetization of gold became a hot political topic for decades to come. Nearly all the gold was shipped east to the US Mint and Assay Office, as well as to the leading banks. The western money supply though, still continued to suffer. Even though California was producing about \$50 million in gold each year, the western money supply was estimated at \$45 million in the Pacific states.

Prospectors soon found the greatest single mining district in history, the great Comstock Lode in western Nevada toward the end of 1859. This caused another entire landslide of people coming to the west in search of their "el dorado." Prospectors flooded the west, and the population grew dramatically. With this growth came increased demand for coinage of all kinds— gold, silver and minor coinage. Plans for mints in the west to meet the fast growing demands for coins and money were many. Mints were proposed in Oregon (The Dalles), California (San Francisco), Colorado Territory (Denver), Montana (Helena), Nevada (Carson City) and more. Congress, however, was not keen to build new facilities. Jobs were needed in the south, particularly after the Civil War. Mints at Dahlonega, Charlotte and New Orleans were established and/or rebuilt to meet the special interest demands of certain influential politicians.

Politics demanded the west wait for their coinage and money supply. Miners mined gold and silver and wanted to be paid in kind. They would not wait for an inefficient



Boxing Token



Boxing Token Reverse



government who had little concept of what was happening 3000 miles away. Western merchants responded with the production of a series of privately minted gold coins. Some were made with the cooperation of the US Mint through the Assay Office, but most were not.

This early gold rush period demand became the step-father of a new era of collectors- the pioneer gold collectors. Coins were produced in Colorado, Utah, Oregon and California. The denominations mimicked the standard US coinage, except for the \$50 denomination, which the US Mint officially called an ingot. Today, they are sometimes known as slugs. San Francisco companies such as Moffat & Co., the Miners Bank, Kellogg & Co., Baldwin & Co., Dunbar & Co. and others all produced gold coinage in traditional denominations from about 1849-1857. The same held true for the Oregon and Utah coinage.

### **Private Money Evolves from Need for Specie**

Private coinage is a byproduct of private money. Private paper money, known as scrip, has been issued by banks and private companies since the second decade of the nineteenth century. An inadequate supply of coin and paper currency led to private production of paper money.

Private banks in the east expanded the money supply by creating notes and deposits on a fractional reserve. This meant that the banks could lend a much greater sum of money than they had in reserve." ... "When these banks suspended payments during fiscal crises such as occurred in 1817-1821, 1837-1841, 1857, and 1861-1863, private citizens and local government bodies resorted to issuing their own scrip."

These included large quantities of tokens, including many with advertising of local merchants. The most popular periods of token production were from the 1830's ("Hard Times") and the Civil War (early 1860's).

### **The California Coinage System**

In California the circulating currency was gold.

Gold dust, nuggets and ingots took the place of American coins, which were nearly non-existent. The private mints pumped millions of gold coins into the western monetary supply, but it was still inadequate.

Meanwhile, Gold dust as money had its problems. Purity was the main issue. Placer and native gold from different parts of California (and elsewhere in the world) contain differing amounts of gold. While the dust and nuggets can all have the same color, some gold may only contain 60% gold, and others up to 90% gold. The impurities are usually silver and copper, though arsenic and other elements can be natural alloys as well.

To complicate matters, miners used mercury to amalgamate fine particles of gold that were panned or sluiced. Thus a banker, when presented with native or placer gold, could not offer a standard amount when someone was offering to pay a bill in gold dust. Some bankers tried a standard value, such as \$16., which represented a fineness of 0.7741. Gold at the time was

\$20.67 per Troy ounce.

A more steady and reliable form of currency was needed, so Californians figured if the Government would not supply the coins, they would.

The minor coinage shortage in California was so severe, that foreign coins were commonly accepted into the local monetary system. Foreign coinage, at their respective exchange rates, were legal tender from 1837 to 1857, and up to 1859 as well. French francs were commonly used as twenty cent picces. But by 1854, importation of French francs, which were worth 18 3/5 cents each, were becoming a problem. Accepted as circulating currency, importers were making a killing at the exchange, which was nearly an instant ten per cent profit. San Francisco bankers put an end to the importation practice in December, 1854.

### **US Minor Coinage**

US minor coinage was in terribly short supply in the 1850's. The US Mint system coming out of the 1840's had been under producing minor coinage. As the demand grew nearly exponentially, the Mint made efforts to meet demand by raising production up to 30



Olga Token

times in a single year. 1853 is a good example. Both dimes and quarters had been produced at relatively slow rates over the past decade. Quarter production ranged from 46,000 a year to just over 900,000 from a single mint, averaging about 426,000 per year/mint. In 1853, after several years of outcry, the Mint produced more than 15 million quarters and 12 million dimes in that year alone, a figure thirty times greater than the previous average annual production. This underscores why Americans were using foreign coinage as minor coinage, and how important private coinage became when there was not a supply of regular circulating coinage.

### Private Minor Coinage

Western private minor coinage may have developed as the result of the Civil War. Hundreds of thousands of cent and nickel sized tokens circulated during



Midway Saloon



Auburn Token

the Civil War. Some were merchant advertising tokens, others political in theme. A few were used as minor coinage and carried a denomination on the reverse. The difference between a "coin" and a "token" is not well understood.

At one time, tokens were considered to be objects not intended for monetary use. Most Civil War tokens fall into this category. They have no denomination, but may carry an advertisement for a merchant or a political slogan. Most minor coinage is made of metal with little intrinsic value, such as copper - unlike silver or gold coins, which carry a high intrinsic value and were made of a size and weight conforming to specific standards set by the US Mint such that the coins contained an intrinsic value close to their face value. American tokens and minor coinage do not carry an intrinsic value.

Small denomination coins were so scarce during the Civil War that two other new forms of coinage evolved. encased postage and fractional currency. U. S. 3 cent stamps were placed in brass or silvered brass holders the size of regular coins, with a merchant's name embossed on one side, and a thin piece of mica on the

other side protecting the US postage stamp. Values are known up to 30 cents. Fractional currency were paper notes modeled after regular currency, but for amounts under one dollar. This was the method preferred by the Government, but the public was unwilling to accept paper "change."

The Coinage Act of 1873 created major changes in American small denomination coins. Congress restricted the amount of small coins that would be accepted as legal tender. Amounts in excess of \$5 were essentially demonetized - they were no longer legal tender.

Additionally, the half dime, or nickel, was eliminated altogether. This was catastrophic to westerners, who proposed a 20 cent piece in 1874, which coincidentally was the value of those old French Francs. They were created because of the elimination of the 5 cent

piece.

The halting of the half dime coinage... and a general shortage of minor coinage in the West, led [Senator John P.] Jones [of Nevada] to enter a bill in Congress ... for a 20 cent coin. The new denomination was expected to alleviate problems with daily transactions. As merchants often priced items at 10 cents, customers paying with a quarter dollar were being forced to take a dime in change and forfeit five cents. As Dan Dequille explained of the situation in Virginia City:

The money in circulation is wholly gold and silver coin, and the smallest coin in use is the bit, or ten cent piece - sometimes spoken of as a 'short bit', as not being twelve and one half cents, the 'long bit.' There being no smaller change in use than the dime, the bit passes for half of the twenty five cents. Thus whenever a customer throws down a quarter of a dollar in payment for a drink or cigar, he gets back a dime, and so has paid 15 cents for his 'nip' or smoke. The new twenty cent pieces, of which Senator Jones of Nevada is the father, will, however, cure this little ill.



## Pioneer Western Minor Coinage

Little work has been done to delineate the earliest known western tokens with denominations. Most tokens are not dated. Those that are not dated can be dated by discerning the dates of operation of the business. This information is usually obtained in local or regional business directories.

A number of California tokens are known from the gold rush era of the 1850's. Gold coin collectors will recognize some of the names – such as Dr. J. L. Polhemus of Sacramento, because they were counterstamped on some US gold coins found in the SS Central America treasure. The earliest known dated California piece, according to one author, is the Eureka token from San Francisco in 1867 that comes in three denominations – 5, 10 and 50 cents.

## Saloons and Coins

### The First Period: Pre-1900

Saloons were a source of many of the first private minor coinage. While tokens were made for nearly every business imaginable, saloons in the west were the most frequented business, and as such had perhaps the highest profile. Consequently, by the 1880's there were a number of western saloons that had tokens made and given out as change. Almost none of these are dated, and can only be dated by attribution in directories, as mentioned previously. Currently there is no publication that lists all of the early western pioneer coinage. Books exist for tokens from each of the western states, but few, if any of these books contain the dates of issue.

Saloon tokens were usually good for a drink of some kind. Some have denominations of 12 ½ cents (one bit) or 25 cents (two bits). Others carry denominations of 5 and 10 cents. Some state they are good for a glass of beer, or whiskey. One popular form of saloon token before 1900 was in relation to the billiard tables in the saloon. Billiard table manufacturers and saloon merchants promoted their tables and the saloon by placing their advertising on the front and back, many with

pictures of the pool tables. Monarch and Brunswick tables were two of the most respected in the 1880's, and some of the finest saloon tokens of the period reflect them pictorially.

Sales of major western collections have featured many of these early pre-1900 pieces. These sales included the Schilling Nevada and New Mexico collections, the Harkey New Mexico Collection and the LaDue California and Nevada collections, all held by Holabird Americana of Reno over the past ten years.

## The Post-1900 Period

### A Plethora of Tokens

America struggled through the 1890's economically and politically. Mine production was way down in the west, and politicians were fighting about the demonetization of gold and silver as well as over the standardization of precious metals prices.

After 1900, new important gold and silver deposits were discovered, and a rebirth in western civilization began. Mining brought more prospectors west. Boom towns and mining camps emerged from the isolated deserts and mountains. With these camps came more tokens, and therefore chances for a collector to obtain uniquely western pioneer coinage.



Luning Token

## Ghost Town Tokens

Unlike other places throughout the US and world, the west has not had a stable business climate. The boom and bust nature of mining camps leaves them here today and gone tomorrow. All too often, a mining camp develops, a few tokens are issued, and within six months or a year, the town dies from lack of regularly producing ores and no stable economy. Famous mining camps such as Bodie, Rawhide and Rhyolite are household names to some, but unheard of by others. A television series was developed about Rawhide, but the town is completely gone, and an open pit mine takes its place today. Rhyolite became famous in modern times for its ruins on the edge of Death Valley. Its newspaper was



run by Sam Clemens's (Mark Twain) relative, and the largest mine was once controlled by New York financier Charles Schwaab, namesake of the large stock trading firm today. Bodie is perhaps the best known ghost town in America. With hundreds of empty wood buildings frozen in time 8000 feet high in the mountains, the once booming mining camp is now a California State Park. Most of the western ghost town tokens known were found in the ground. They were not collected at the time, and as a result, mint state examples of most western ghost town tokens are rare or non-existent.

### Western Tokens

Western tokens are among the most popular and highly collected in America. One of the reasons is that they are truly rare. Many are unique, or perhaps no more than five or ten are known. A "common" western token has perhaps fifty or more known. A "common" eastern token has perhaps 1000 known. The reason for the rarity, perhaps, is that the western states are born of mining and gambling. Metal products sustained the economy. The buying and selling of metals was second nature to western folks, while it was of little concern elsewhere. Major smelters in California and Colorado processed and "recycled" metals daily, though the term "recycled" is a word of modern use.

The period that most tokens were made and used in the west was the 1905-1919 period. With the advent of prohibition, saloons went away, and with them, the need for much of the private minor coinage. Additionally, Nevada outlawed slot machines about the same time. Nevada slot machine operators were always removing trade tokens from the nickel and quarter slot machine money boxes and dumping the tokens into bags that were in turn destroyed. Some went to the smelters, others to garbage dumps. At least three large hoards of several thousand trade tokens were found in these circumstances, all distributed into the marketplace more than a decade ago, creating hundreds of new collectors. These discoveries were akin to the SS Central

America gold coin treasure. Other states followed suit. New Mexico and California slot operators and candy machine vendors did the same thing, and tokens were destroyed by the thousands.

### Who Made Tokens?

Tokens were made by a number of medallie manufacturers, most of which had coin presses. Western token manufacturers include Klinkner & Co., Moise and Moise-Klinkner, Patrick & Co., Irvine & Co., Los Angeles Rubber Stamp Co., Salt Lake Rubber Stamp Co., and a host of others. Their names are usually found at the bottom center of the obverse of each coin in tiny letters next to the rim.



Harem Token

### Shapes, Sizes & Denominations

Tokens come in at least fifteen different shapes and a variety of sizes. The most common shape is the standard US nickel size, followed by the standard quarter size. From there, the sky is the limit. Tokens are known with barrel shape, star, square, diamond, ovals, rectangles, four and eight scalloped pieces, octagonal, heart, clover leaf, bell, and others. Most are made of brass or aluminum, though many are made of nickel, tin and other metals.

The denominations of tokens also runs the gamut. Older tokens tend to have old-school denominations such as one bit or two bits, a drink, 2 ½ cents (the price of a bath or a shave). Many of the tokens from the post-1910 era carry standard denominations of 5, 10, 25, 50 cents up to \$5. There are many with odd denominations. Some are good for a cigar, bath, or a drink at the bar. A few tokens have cut out designs in the middle. Some of the cut outs are in the shape of the denomination, others can be the proprietor's surname initial. The use of a cutout was often to keep the token from being used as a coin in vending or gaming machines, which had internal devices, including magnets, used to segregate non legal tender.

### Condition

same as average American coinage. As stated previously, most of the western pieces are found in or on the ground. On rare occasions, some are found in old coin accumulations. But in general, they were a product of the pre-prohibition era, and were destroyed afterwards, mostly because they interfered with the vending machine trade.

Tokens, or pioneer minor coinage, rarely are found in mint state condition. They degrade or oxidize easily because the majority are made of brass or aluminum, both very susceptible to corrosion from reactions with chemicals in the soils.

Many of the western pieces are so rare that a collector is forced to have any example that may appear on the market. As an example, the tiny, short-lived mining camp of Platina in southern Nevada had one merchant who issued aluminum tokens. Two are known. One of the two has a piece missing because it corroded in the soil. When it came up for auction about a decade ago, the damaged piece sold for about \$400. Today it might fetch \$1000. There are still only two known.

The gold mining camp of Ballarat, California, on the western slope of the Panamint range in the southern California desert region had a business known as the Headquarters Saloon. A few of these tokens, perhaps ten, were found in a family archive and reached the market. Some were circulated, and a few were found in mint state. The discovery of ghost town saloon tokens in any condition is exciting, and for some to still exist in mint state is remarkable.

Some collectors will collect for condition, others for a specific theme or geographic area. But if you want completeness to any area of collecting, you will never get them all if you only collect mint state. They just do not exist.

#### Collecting Areas and Favorite Categories

*Collecting interests of pioneer minor coinage are never obvious to the outside world of coin collectors. While coin collectors may collect Morgan dollars, Liberty quarters, or Lincoln cents, token col-*

*lectors collect nearly anything. In fact, every attribute that a token possesses is a reason to collect like or similar pieces. The following list contains a dozen of the most popular categories:*

1. *Saloons.* Saloon tokens that have the word "Saloon" on the obverse are popular from any western town, whether or not it was a ghost town.

2. *Ghost towns.* Tokens from places such as Bodie, Rhyolite, Aurora generate great historical interest.

3. *Billiards and pool tokens.*

4. *Cigar stores.*

5. *Pictorial pieces.* Some tokens have embossed pictures of miners, burros, elephants, eagles, pool tables and so forth.

6. *Mining camps.* The California mother lode region, as well as Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico and Colorado mining camps are among the most popular. Examples of popular mining camps are Tombstone, Goldfield, Nevada; Bisbee, Arizona; Virginia City, Nevada; Cripple Creek, Colorado; Leadville, Colorado; Placerville, California.

7. *Certain geographic areas, generally related to mining.* This is perhaps more regional than the specific mining camp category. Regions such as the southern California desert region are very popular. The Gilpin - Clear Creek and the San Juan regions of Colorado are also very popular.

8. *Indian Trader tokens.* These were issued by often remote trading posts in the American southwest. Many of these are centered near the Four Corners area, but they tend to be from Arizona and New Mexico.

9. *Famous western characters.* Tokens related to famous western characters are very rare and desirable. Examples include Bill Hickock, Jack Longstreet, Virgil Earp and others.

10. *Military tokens.*

11. *Water tokens.* Many of the western mining camps had no water systems, so it was sold by the gallon or barrel.

12. *Condition.* Condition census pieces changed the coin market, and will change the pioneer coin market.



Miss Olga Token

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photos, letters to the editor, or ideas to:

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# No Place for a Woman?

**The California gold camps were hard on the ladies, but that didn't stop them from arriving, surviving, and sometimes thriving**

By Patricia Cronin Marcello

Submitted by SPPN Member, Cherie Scheops

Who would have been foolish enough to travel through hell to get to a place where a person's ears were cut off for stealing and murder was commonplace? The women of the California Gold Rush were. They suffered rugged and perilous journeys by land and sea to face the hardest people and the most backbreaking work of their lives. Why? For some, it was the fantasy of gold, the prospect of untold riches lying on the ground, waiting to be gathered by the wagon load. The dream had the whole world in an uproar by 1849, but by the time most folks could get to California, the days of easy pickings were over. There was still plenty of gold, but it demanded more hard labor than even some strong men could stand, to extract it from the uncooperative earth. Few gold seekers were women.

Some Gold Rush women had come along with their husbands to the mines and had traveled for months in covered wagons to get there, because the overland route was the cheapest. But some sent their man off alone. Eventually, several of the wives grew tired of waiting for them to return home. So they packed their belongings and set off with their children in tow to find them.

One such woman, Lucinda Mann, waited three years for her husband to come back, before she decided to take her children overland to California. When she reached the mining town of Jackson, she was shocked to learn that her husband had died four months before her arrival. Rather than go back east, she settled there and took charge of the store her husband had started. The fol-

lowing year, she married another miner and eventually she came to be considered a great success by the women of her time.

But only women who actually lived in the camps knew how hard life was there. Basic conditions were not at



Lotta Crabtree

all comfortable. Miners moved from claim to claim and lived in tents or shacks or slept on the ground until they settled on a site they knew would be productive. Only then would a log cabin be raised. Usually, it had a dirt floor and no windows. Nothing was expected to be permanent in the gold fields, and these rough conditions kept most women in the towns.

One thing was for certain: a woman who wasn't out looking for gold had her choice of permanent jobs. Those who took on the chores of washing and cooking for the men were highly paid. Eastern women, disgruntled over low wages, were encouraged to come to California where cooks could make as much as thirty dollars a day. Women who washed clothes could often make twice as much.

By 1849 standards, this was big money, but not in gold country, where high wages were necessary for survival. At one point, a dozen eggs cost ten dollars and one potato or one onion went for a dollar each. Often, miners struggled to support themselves. Just saving enough to get back home seemed impossible-never mind being lucky enough to strike it rich.

Luck played a major role in the Gold Rush, and women who came to the mining towns were more likely to be professional gamblers than prospectors. At night and on Sundays, the men wanted recreation. Great piles of gold dust were frittered away at the gaming tables, fixtures in every mining town. Women who dealt the popular

card game Monte were bound to make their fortune without ever getting a speck of dirt on their gowns. And, of course, there were the prostitutes. Some of these women dressed as men, and traveled from camp to camp by mule to make their living. Only in the mining towns could an average woman become fabulously wealthy and maybe move on to an elegant life in San Francisco.

The Gold Rush also had a hand in making some ordinary woman if not rich. Mill, where was found by shall in 1848, named Jenny the cook. It was pot that get found was overnight, when it went that it was



Mollie O'Brian  
of Cripple Creek

en famous, At Sutter's the first gold James Mar-a woman Wimmer was in her the first nug-boiled in lye proving unchanged indeed gold.

Dame Shirley was the pen name of Louisa Amelia Knapp Smith Clappe. Her "Letters from the California Mines" ran as a column in a California magazine. She described herself as a "shivering, frail, home-loving little thistle." After living for a time in San Francisco, Louisa and her husband, Dr. Fayette Clapp, moved to the mining town of Rich Bar. She'd had enough dampness and fog. It is through Dame Shirley that we have our best descriptions of the only other women living in Rich Bar at the time.

The Indiana Girl, whose father ran the Indiana hotel, was large and brawny and had a voice to match. Not only did she wear miner's boots, she cleaned dirty dishes with her apron. Once, during a particularly bad snowstorm, the Indiana Girl trudged off to fetch a 50-pound sack of flour, which she lugged back into camp, slung over her shoulder.

A woman known only as Mrs. R. made \$900 in nine weeks by taking in wash. She weighed only sixty-eight pounds. Another woman, poor Mrs. Bailey, died of peritonitis soon after meeting Dame Shirley.

Full of life and vinegar was the infamous Lola Montez. Born in Ireland in 1818, she was an actress of questionable morals and talent. By the time she reached San Francisco, she had been through three marriages and numerous scandals involving the likes of Ludwig I of Bavaria and composer Franz Liszt. When Montez took her famed "spider dance" into the gold fields, it wasn't warmly received. In fact, the miners booed her off the stage. She threatened to horsewhip one newspaper editor

who had review, to a duel. to Grass ation, yet to her ec-She kept ered in and she walking It was in Montez



Zena Jackson

given her a bad and dared another Montez retreated Valley in humili-she remained true centric nature. a pet bear teth-her front yard, was often seen it on a leash.

Grass Valley that met Lotta Crabtree, who grew up to become the best-known comedienne of her time. Montez taught Crabtree to ride and to dance the fandango and the Highland fling. At least one historical source indicates that Montez invited Crabtree to go with her to Australia, where Montez herself migrated after her Grass Valley cabin burned to the ground. Lotta's mother discouraged her daughter from doing so, but shortly thereafter, Lotta was sold to an acting troupe by her father. It marked the start of her professional career. In 1866, Crabtree mocked her old teacher Montez by parodying her in "The Irish Diamond."

Despite their trying circumstances, or perhaps because of them, the women of the Gold Rush were some of the boldest and grittiest women in American history. They deserve our respect for their strength, their tenacity and their ability to adapt and survive in a society composed almost exclusively of men.

*Patricia Cronin Marcello is a freelance writer and editor who lives in Pennsylvania. She writes for both children and adults and most recently completed Devil's Gate, a novel about crossing the Oregon-California Trail in 1848.*



*Continued from the Fall/Winter 2006 edition of the Brasher Bulletin:*

# Part IV: Gold as a Cumbersome Curmudgeonly Commodity 1849-1870

*Editor's Note: In the last edition of the Brasher Bulletin, we ended the Curmudgeonly discussion with Ingots and Gold Bars. We resume this fourth installment with a new topic, which immediately follows the gold bar section from the last Brasher.*

## PURITY OF SERVICE COMES FROM QUICK REFINING

Mint fees for coining and separating the silver from the gold were also steep. Only gold as low as 820 fine contained enough silver to offset costs. Time plus high charges led Blake to conclude that "nearly all the gold taken out in California goes through the assay office instead of the Mint." In 1869, refiner Louis A. Garnett made the same arguments, but in stronger tones, to Congress. (44)

The forever bubbling mind of Agoston Haraszthy led in 1857 to the construction of the Eureka Gold and Silver Refinery, which would use sulfuric acid. The Hungarian metallurgist felt it more efficiently separated the gold from the silver than the Mint favorite, nitric acid. However, this 60 by 120-foot brick establishment at the southwest corner of Brannan and Seventh Streets had a rocky career from opening on March 14, 1857, until May 2, 1861, when Emil Just sold it to Kellogg, Hewston & Co. On May 7, 1861, the San Francisco press carried an advertisement:

### ASSAY OFFICE AND REFINERY

The undersigned have opened  
A GOLD AND SILVER REFINERY,  
in connection with their Assay Office,  
and are prepared to receive deposits  
for refining.

Returns will be made in unparted bars,  
refined bars, or coin,  
at the option of the depositor.  
Office 416 Montgomery



Wells Fargo banking superintendent Samuel Knight predicted, "you will be able to get returns for your dust in much less time than the Mint now takes." Of course, Knight was correct.

This firm made the refinery an operating concern. By setting fees lower than the Mint and being speedier, it now credited the depositor with silver, offsetting its assay and refining charges. Its speed almost equaled bar assayers, drawing in customers. Kellogg, Hewston & Co. sent their fine gold bars to the Branch Mint for coining. European bar-buyers, who made their profit from the silver mixed with the gold, had to look elsewhere for supplies.

John Kellogg and John Hewston followed Haraszthy innovatively contributing to refining techniques. Mints around the world used a sixty-year-old French process where they melted and granulated the bars in cold water to transform the bullion into a pile of B-Bs. This provided more surfaces for acid to act. However, the time-consuming process produced metal only 970 fine; it needed a second granulation and refining to make the gold 99 percent pure.

In 1865, "the nervous 'hurry-hurry,' so characteristic of California work" frustrated John Reynolds, who had charge of Kellogg, Hewston & Co. refining pots. Customers constantly clamored to get their refined gold to the Branch Mint two miles away before the close of business hours, and ahead of all other depositors. Coin was scarce. Being first let them not only receive their coin quickly, but also saved on interest.

Bars quick from the molds and chipped went aboard the express wagon "much too hot to be handled without gloves," an observer noted, which became "an excellent safeguard against any attempted robbery in that sparsely settled district." Reynolds, however, demanded bars not B-Bs, kept his acid refining pots boiling, and patented the knowledge that silver dissolves more quickly in bars than in granules. In four hours, one pot with bars would produce 3,000 ounces of refined gold at 996 fine, versus 2,000 ounces of granulated gold at 970 fine. Under the old method, with double refining, the process took 15 hours; Reynolds cut the time to six. (45)



Eureka Gold & Silver Refinery

On April 27, 1866, William Chapman Ralston of the Bank of California gathered capitalists and bankers, including Wells, Fargo & Co., to purchase Kellogg, Hewston & Co. for

\$200,000, and transform it into the San Francisco Assay and Refining Works. Wells Fargo acquired 15 percent of the \$1 million capital stock. "Dust and Bullion can be forwarded to us from any part of the country," the refinery advertised, "and returns made through Wells, Fargo & Co's Express." After all, Wells Fargo carried so much bullion that between 1858 and 1900 the company published statistics of precious metals production for the Pacific slope. (46)

Capitalists also looked to acid manufacture. From 1856 to 1867, the San Francisco Chemical Works at Mission Dolores, provided acids for Mint and private assayers. However, monopoly brought competition. The Golden City Chemical Works, which mine owners and bankers incorporated on February 15, 1867, included Wells Fargo's Charles E. Melane and metals dealer Thomas H. Selby among five trustees. This modern manufactory at 7th and Townsend measured 200 by 150 feet and succeeded Kellogg, Hewston & Co's chemical business. Daily, it produced 10,000 pounds of cheap, but noxious sulfuric acid for the San Francisco Assaying and Refining Works, and used more sulfuric acid to make 3,000 pounds of safer, but

more expensive nitric acid for the Branch Mint. (47)

As private refiners began taking away more of the gold trade, the Mint attempted to become more competitive. Cutting the time for returns became crucial. On June 22, 1864, the *Alta* announced that the government had restored the bullion fund, transferred in \$1 million, and expected to make the first payments that day. The Branch Mint took two or three days to determine the value of the deposit—still longer than the private sector—but that was far better than "weeks of vexatious delay and consequent loss on the part of depositors."

On March 14, 1867, superintendent Robert B. Swain advertised, "Under instructions from the Secretary of Treasury, the charge for refining Gold bullion at this Branch is reduced from 14 to 11 cents an ounce"—still a penny more than Kellogg, Hewston & Co. had charged since 1861. However, the San Francisco Assaying & Refining Works now charged 8 cents for parting, while the Philadelphia Mint and the New York Assay Office set their fee at 5 cents an ounce.

In the late 1860s, the Assaying and Refining Works essentially captured the Branch Mint's refining. The March 1872 San Francisco City Directory observed, "Most of the gold and silver coined at the Branch Mint, is now refined at private offices." Even after the New Mint [Now the Old Mint] at Fifth and Mission Streets opened, the situation did not change much. The City Directory for March 1877 remarked that although the Refining Department went into operation in 1875, and refined one million ounces a month, this amount was "frequently insufficient to meet the demand for its services." (48)



Haraszthy

## GO WITH THE GOLD FLOW

From 1855 to 1861, California produced \$314 million in gold, of which the Branch Mint coined 36 percent; the New York Assay Office parted raw gold bars into fine bars to account for 35 percent; and 29 percent left in unparted bars directed to Europe.



Of that going abroad, European immigration and commerce accounted for a portion of it. Most bullion left California because gold was a valuable commodity, like wheat, and the British and French charged less for coining. The British, as usual, had a complicated system of charges that the San Francisco Assaying and Refining works calculated in the late 1860s at 12 cents an ounce. The French charged 1/5 percent coining and 6 cents parting, for about 10 cents per ounce. Australia, Russia, and the United States produced gold; France and Great Britain coined or recoinced it, depending on the form which it arrived. (49)

Foreign banks sprang up in San Francisco to handle this trade. Their number included Benjamin Davidson & Co. (1849), agent of the Rothschilds; the London & San Francisco Bank, Ltd. (1865); the Anglo-Californian Bank, Ltd. (1873); and the London, Paris & American Bank, Ltd. (1884).

That 35 percent refined in the New York Assay Office came from California banks. Gold Rush banking revolved around the purchase of gold dust and the sale of eastern drafts known as "bills of exchange." Miners and merchants used paper as an easy way to send money home to loved ones or pay mercantile suppliers. Banks made two or three copies of each exchange. Wells Fargo, for instance, filled out Firsts and Seconds, sending the Second on the following mail steamer. After 1856, Wells Fargo made provisions for Thirds, but rarely, hardly ever, issued them. Wells Fargo paid the first copy to reach its eastern branches in New York, Boston, or Philadelphia; the second copy became void.

A banking house, such as Wells, Fargo & Co., balanced the value of paper with the worth of gold. After all, if a bank sent more gold to New York than it did paper, it drained capital from California; if it sent more paper than gold, its drafts "bounced," and insolvency and death followed. Bank profit came through fees for exchange and playing the gold market, though cynical banker William T. Sherman thought banks did not make anything through this process.

Gold Rush Western banking bonded with assaying.

In the mid-1850s, Adams & Co. worked with several of the Hungarian assayers, but its failure in February 1855 ended such cooperation. Gerrit Bell, head of Wells Fargo's Banking operations for four years ending April 1, 1859, promptly opened an assaying office next door to Wells Fargo's Parrott Building office. In 1860 Denver, Colorado, [Milton E. and Austin M.] Clark, [Emanuel H.] Gruber & Co's "Bank & Mint" produced the private coinage needed for commerce.

Wells Fargo, too, as a company, did what banker Bell did privately: Opened an assay office. Wells Fargo's Portland establishment assayed eastern Oregon and Idaho gold from June 1863 to January 1867, while in 1866, Wells Fargo joined with William C. Ralston, head of the mighty Bank of California, to form the San Francisco Assaying and Refining Works. The next year, the First National Bank in isolated Austin, Nevada, began assaying bullion.

In the 1860s, the demand for eastern and European bills of exchange declined, but the demand in Europe for unparted bars grew. Lewis A. Garnett, the prime money spokesman for California, explained publicly. He had replaced Haraszthy in 1857 as the Melter and Refiner at the Mint, supervised Kellogg, Hewston & Co's operation, and then after a stint as a money broker, now managed the San Francisco Assaying and Refining Works. On September 8, 1869, Garnett told a congressional committee about the dispersal of the Pacific Coast's \$40 million annual production of gold.

Gold sales became a balancing act between costs and returns. The Branch Mint coined only \$7 million of that \$40 million. Gold dust dealers calculated coin charges between California and Europe, and adjusted their shipments accordingly. For instance, gold below 750 fine and above 950 fine went to the Branch Mint, as its parting charge for the former was 7 cents an ounce, compared to 14 cents above 750 fine, and nothing for gold over 950 fine.

Other Mint customers were just lazy. Garnett snidely remarked that the portion of gold his former employer received came "principally from remote districts far in the interior, where the relative commercial value of bullion and its minting value is not at all understood."

The Assaying and Refining Works had a greater impact on the amount of coinage than the Mint. A printing press cannot increase the money supply in a hard money state, particularly one that lacks accommodating elasticity" from financial paper. However, entrepreneurial Californians undertook the functions of a central bank by pouring twice as much coinage into circulation than the Mint. They did this by refining bars cheaply themselves, and then sending refined bars to the Mint to be coined. By not sending their natural gold to join the \$18 million in unparted bars headed for Europe, they took a 3/8 percent loss.

Garnett testified, "the directors of our institution, who are the principal bankers here"-William C. Ralston, Charles McLane, John Parrott, and Alvinza Hayward, "see that to stimulate enterprise, [and] keep business and trade active," they must send \$15 million in gold a year to the Mint to be turned into coin. "By keeping money easy," the president of the refinery and its fifth director said, and losing "the three-eighths per cent. they would make on this amount of bullion by sending it to a foreign banker," they hope "this amount comes back to them again in stimulating the general business of the country."

Garnett's overall conclusion was sad. "There is a constant incentive to send gold abroad," he said, "simply as a commodity, which pays." Gold departed California as merely an outward-bound raw material. In 1869, twenty years after the Gold Rush Garnett mourned, "That is what is ruining us here." (50)

#### LOCAL GOLD BUYERS TAKE OVER

As noted previously, fixed-price dust-buying at a distance caused headache and financial loss in 1853 and 1854 for Wells, Fargo & Co. and Adams & Co. The two banking and express firms alleviated part of the pain by offering to have samples assayed in San Francisco. The concept of a fixed price for gold began

eroding, so that by 1856, buyers no longer bought all dust for the same price. Gold-buying became decentralized and assaying became a necessity.

Miners in areas where the assay value was above the base price, demanded credit

for the extra value, while men in poor regions disliked discount, and passed low quality gold in high value locales. As the dust market grew more complex and mixing and fraud grew more common, the supply city bankers withdrew their capital and placed responsibility on the local buyers.

As a matter of survival, they quickly learned assaying. When strangers attempted to sell dust from distant places, knowledgeable buyers offered instead to send it down for coinage and paid a partial advance on its estimated value.

In 1861, Charles T. Blake, a dust-buyer working out of C.T.H. Palmer's Wells Fargo office in Folsom, commented, "each particular lead contains gold with a physiognomy which tells an expert at once from whence it comes." He knew a hundred different kinds of gold around Michigan Bluff, ranging from 630 to 930 fine. Gold could vary ten percent in value between claims "not one hundred feet apart," he observed. Integrity and expertise were the two components of gold dust buying. "Pay no more for dust than it is worth, nor make no arrangements with anyone to pay less than it is worth," wrote Wells Fargo express superintendent James Milton Vansyckle on December 10, 1857, to William Daegener, the Company's Columbia agent. "This is the only true motto to do any kind of business on," he advised, adding, "It is the course we pursue here" in San Francisco. Wells Fargo had faith in its employees, and let Daegener determine prices. "You are on the ground," wrote banking superintendent Gerrit Bell on March 15, 1858, "& must do the best you can."

To prosper, local resident buyers had to know "gold and its value the moment they see it," Blake said.

A Growing Desire for Gold Dust



Beginning about 1857, up country bankers added assaying to their skills. In Columbia, agent Daegener had been active since 1852. As "the oldest Dust buyer in these parts of the country," he wrote Wells Fargo's banker Samuel Knight on May 27, 1860, this occupation had become "a kind of second nature." He certainly felt comfortable in it. "It would at present be the best policy to employ my Capital in the Gold Dust, as no other Investment is safe." Of course, he became an assayer, with his office in the rear of the photogenic brick Wells, Fargo & Co. Express building in the state park. "Miners sell their Dust where they think they get the most for it," Daegener wrote on June 17, 1860, to Wells Fargo's general manager Louis McLane. With the knowledge of local gold gained from godzillion assays, Daegener explained, "I shall be sure to pay the highest price & have a profit left."

The knowledgeable John S. Hittell, commercial editor for the *Alta*, observed in his 1861 handbook *Mining in the Pacific States of North America*, that: "The buyers send their dust to San Francisco by Wells, Fargo & Co's express, which has an office in every town of note between the Colorado and Fraser River. The charge for bringing the dust to San Francisco varies from one quarter of one percent to two and a quarter percent."

While anybody could become an assayer, only those that continually and constantly produced correct assays had their bars accepted without rechecking. Any hint of irregularity sent a bar to the melting pot and discredited the maker. Attorney Alexander Parker Crittenden explained market facts to his son-in-law Sidney M. Van Wyck. Van Wyck, temporarily in San Francisco, proposed keeping his flourishing assay office in Aurora, Nevada, while opening a new one in Virginia City. "If the business there [in Aurora] is done in your

name, the assays there will have to be just as accurate as yours over here," Crittenden wrote from Virginia City on April 7, 1864. He warned, "Any error committed at that [Aurora] office will damage your business here just as much as if it were your own error." Furthermore, only

"the accuracy of your work and the fact that your valuation of bars will be taken in San Francisco without any re-assay" would determine Van Wyck's success in Virginia City. That was it in a nutshell. As an afterthought, Crittenden added, "You had better talk with [bankers William C.] Ralston and [John] Parrott about your bars being taken just as readily as if they were from any office in San Francisco." (51)

One of the first Wells Fargo agent-assayers was Charles Theodore Hart Palmer. Situated in Folsom at the head of the Sacramento Valley Railroad, twenty-two miles from Sacramento, from 1857 to 1871, Palmer and his employees left detailed records and graphic descriptions of their business. Palmer chose a good locale. Using 1898 statistics, Mint Superintendent Frank A. Leach observed that Sacramento County produced the highest fineness gold in California, and the best came from Folsom placers. Today, Palmer's assay, express, and banking office at 823 Sutter Street is the headquarters of the Folsom Historical Society.

To provide for financial transactions going outside of Folsom, Palmer entered a correspondent banking relationship with Wells Fargo. Palmer purchased gold dust from miners, casting it into easily handled bars averaging 907 fine and weighing 100 ounces troy, which he expressed to San Francisco. Evidently, Palmer did not stamp his bars, per remarks in a San Francisco newspaper.



San Francisco, 1856

The *Alta California* confirmed Blake's observations and revealed the workings of the bar business after Congress, on June 30, 1864, decided to tax bullion at 0.5 percent. On September 2, the new tax went into effect in California, and over a month later, on October 13, the paper found the new regula-

tions to be in "the greatest possible muddle." After all, private assayers, as well as the Mint, would collect the tax for the government, and currency questions became bothersome.

"Assayers in the interior, who received dust



from their customers for assay, but their stamp, or trade mark, not being recognized in the market as of an established character," the paper detailed, "send the bars unstamped to Kellogg, Hewston & Co. or Molitor & Co. of this city, to be stamped with their trade mark and the Federal Income stamp, in order to render them readily saleable, and gain them the market value. The assayer here takes a slight chip off each end of the bar [diagonally], and assaying them, stamps the bar without re-melting unless a difference in the fineness of the two chips is discovered, in which case the bar is melted down, re-assayed, and stamped accordingly."

Tax Assessor Caleb T. Fay the next day set aside the "Old Granny" Alta's fears."A short way of calculating the currency value of bullion," he wrote, "is for assayers to collect the tax in gold and exchange it for currency and with that currency pay the tax at the Internal Revenue Office."

Wells Fargo's Banking Department made its profit by holding the gold until Steamer Day and selling when demand went up. From 1856 through 1865, Palmer averaged \$80,000 a month, amounting to 265 pounds of pure gold. He made a net profit of 1.5 percent

terior merchants jumped at this chance to pay Bay City wholesalers.

As an example, in the summer of 1860, Palmer wrote 237 checks monthly. When his gold deposits did not quite cover his check clearings, Wells Fargo charged him daily interest on the overdraft, figured at 1/15 percent per day, or 2 percent per month- charges comparable to current credit cards.

Through this arrangement of continually buying dust and selling checks, Palmer reused his capital, and established the same cycle Wells Fargo had done for its bullion and exchange shipments to New York. (52)

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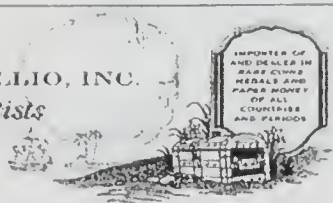
on these transactions, giving him a monthly income of \$1,200 from gold buying.

Wells Fargo deposited Palmer's proceeds from gold sales in his San Francisco checking account. In turn, Palmer sold Folsom merchants and miners Wells Fargo checks drawn on this account and payable in San Francisco. "Checks on San Francisco at Par" drew customers. Rival dust buyers made similar arrangements with other banks, such as the Bank of D.O. Mills in Sacramento and the Bank of California in San Francisco. With no system to clear out of town checks, in-





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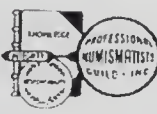
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# In the Pockets of a Pike's Peak Prospector

By SPPN Member, William Robins

Cozily nestled between the Great Rush of '49 and the gold stampede to the Klondike is the celebrated Pikes Peak Gold Rush of 1859. Though someone barely acquainted with United States history could tell you about the California Gold Rush, many times the Rush of '59 is overlooked, and this is a grave misfortune. The grandeur and romance of the Pikes Peak Gold Rush rivals that of any other stampede for the elusive yellow metal. The Pikes Peak Gold Rush actually has roots in the Great California Rush. Miners, too eager to get to the gold fields of California, did some minor prospecting while passing through Colorado. Many found "the color," referring to small particles of gold not worth a significant amount. All of the miners moved on, though, lured by the confirmed riches of California.

By 1857, however, many miners who had returned from California could not quite forget the gold they had found in Colorado. Many formed prospecting groups to explore Colorado for her potential riches. By mid 1858, one of these groups had found a significant portion of gold. Naturally, when news

spread, it was blown way out of proportion. By late summer 1858, many "59ers" were already heading to the Colorado Gold fields, which were located near and along the South Platte River.

Initially, little gold was found, but throughout early 1859, a couple of large strikes were made, the largest by John H. Gregory, who discovered the first lode gold deposit in Colorado. In the early days of the "Gregory Diggings," a miner could take about 1/15 of an ounce of gold from each pan, equivalent to around \$1.

Most miners never found much gold. They could not afford the incredibly inflated price of goods,

or were led by false gold strike stories. The vast majority of miners worked in areas already known to contain gold, but a few of the more adventurous, the more daring, became prospectors, and went into the mountains looking for undiscovered gold pockets. No better way can you see what the life of these special miners was like than to peer into their pockets.



Pikes Peak

All prospectors had numerous necessities. These were the down to earth things that prospectors needed just to survive out in the desolate Colorado gold region. Perhaps the most essential item of all, just as important today in wilderness survival as it was nearly 150 years ago, is a knife. From small pocket knives to large bowie knives (which would, of course, not have been carried in a pocket), all prospectors had to carry a blade of some type. A knife would be the tool of pinnacle essentiality, used for everything from cutting and eating food to self defense from wild animals.



Rivalling the importance of a dependable knife, a match case would be of similar necessity. One of the biggest fears of a prospector would be having to endure a cold Colorado night without a warm fire. A match case would not only keep all your matches together, but would keep them relatively dry. Prospectors would often cross many rivers and streams a day, so keeping matches dry and altogether would be a vital requirement.

Throughout any prospecting adventure, food would be a huge priority. It was custom to carry along a substantial quantity of rations, however foods supplies often would run low, and it would become necessary to find food. Although a man could survive off berries, leaves and other vegetation for some time, meat would provide the best energy, and a dependable firearm would be needed to kill game.

Many prospectors found that rifles or shotguns were too large and bulky to carry around, and therefore settled on

carrying around a sturdy revolver. Ammunition would also have to be carried. By the time of the Pike's Peak Gold Rush, cap and ball pistols were relatively obsolete. However, a few old-timers still carried them around, and for those who did, a lead ball mold and also spare lead (to be melted into balls) would be needed. Since not many people used them, pre-made lead balls would be hard to find in the mining town epicenters such as Denver, so the prices for them would be high. Combine that with the already inflated prices of mining town goods and it simply becomes unreasonable to buy premade lead balls. Therefore, most people using cap and ball pistols made their own ammunition on the trail or before they even left on an

excursion. A powder flask to keep black powder dry would also be needed for a cap and ball pistol.

The GPS system of its day, a compass was necessary to any prospector out in the wilderness. Along with the stars, a compass would be the guide of a miner. There were few maps of the region during the early days of the Rush of '59, therefore dependable navigational tools and skills would be required for any lone prospector. With a little bit of luck, any prospector could find a pocket of gold, but being able to get back to town or people able to get from town back to your strike would be very important.

Although things such as a knife or a compass could keep the blood pumping through a prospector, what kept his spirit and moral up would be gold. During

the days of the rush, there was not a man in Colorado who didn't have gold on his mind. Dreams of rich paystreaks and hearty nuggets kept determined prospectors marching onward. It would be essential for all miners to carry a gold poke. Gold pokes were long, slender pouches, usually made of a soft and pliable leather, such as doe skin, and any gold a prospector found would be put in one of these pouches. The mystique

and romance of the prospector with a poke full of gold dust entering a boomtown after a month or two on the trail is a tale nearly unrivaled in western United States lore. During the early days of the Pikes Peak Gold Rush, most of the mining was done in the form of panning and sluicing on Cherry Creek. Most miners that worked there would make about \$1 a day (which was about the average daily salary back east) for twelve or more hours of work. However, some lucky prospectors, such as John H. Gregory, made thousands of dollars a day. Gold dust and nuggets would not be the only thing a miner would have in his poke though. Usually coins would also be carried in a poke. United States denominations from a dime to \$20



Pikes Peak at Windy Point, Winter 1890



## PROSPECTOR POCKETS

would be common for prospectors to carry. Anything less than a dime would be too insignificant, for almost nothing could be had for less than a dime in mining camps. Privately minted gold coins, especially those minted by Clark, Gruber and Company of Denver, were almost more plentiful as US issues. By late 1860 Clark, Gruber & Company had put about \$120,000 of their own gold coins into circulation. The company had roots tracing back to Leavenworth, Kansas. Austin and Milton

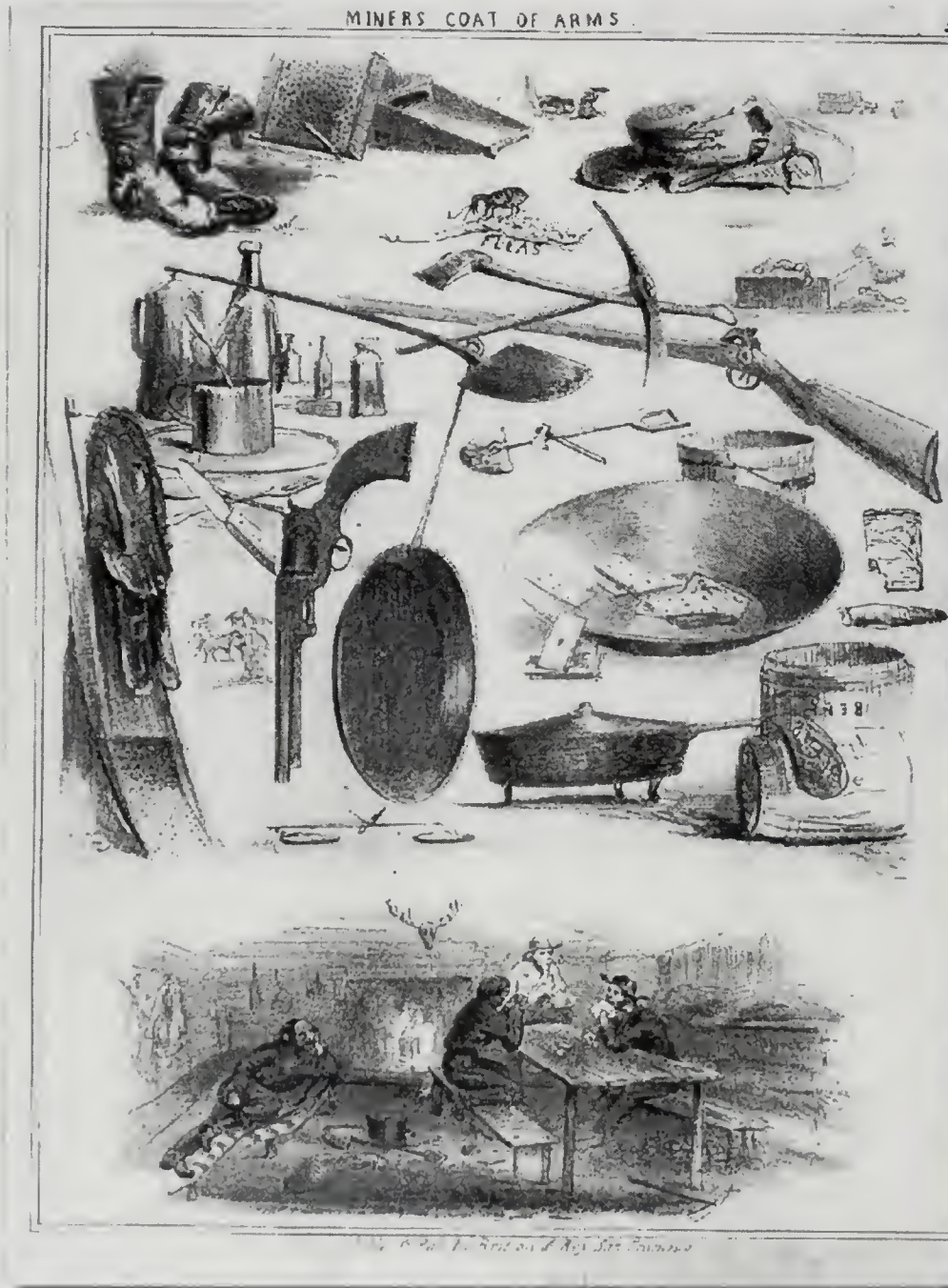
Clark had been grocers when the news of the Pikes Peak Gold Rush hit. Pretty soon, they started buying gold dust and nuggets from miners heading back from the gold fields. They would ship it to Philadelphia to be coined and, ultimately, make a profit. They soon decided to make an entire business out of this, and in March, 1859,

they formed a banking business with Emanuel Gruber. The soul purpose of their company was to buy gold dust to ship to Phila-

delphia to be coined.

They soon ran into problems with shipping the gold dust to Philadelphia. It was time consuming and involved large shipping fees. In late 1859, they decided it would be better to simply make their own coins. In addition to this, they decided to set up a branch bank in Denver, where they would mint their coins. In March, 1860, construction of the Clark, Gruber & Co. Building began and it was not until early July that the building was complete.

It was a grand two story brick edifice with glass windows. They commenced minting coins in mid July, and within a few weeks they were buying as much as \$2000 a day in gold dust. Even though the coins were .8285 pure, they were heavier than the contemporary .900 pure U.S. pieces and had the same metallic value. Clark, Gruber & Co. minted coins and issued banknotes feverishly until mid 1861, when the Gold Rush started to slow. By early 1862, Clark, Gruber & Co. was still minting a few coins dated 1861, but demand was low. Around that time the company switched over



Miner's Coat of Arms

to molding ingots instead of minting coins.

This is most likely because the Civil War had begun to draw many of the small-time miners out of



the area. With less miners coming in with say, \$100 in gold, and more big mining companies coming in with thousands of dollars of gold, it made economical sense to mold a few ingots fitting the deposited amount than to coin the large sum. Even though Clark, Gruber & Co. was doing quite a bit to accommodate the needs of Denverites, what most people in Colorado really wanted was a U.S.

Branch Mint in their region. A U.S. Mint could produce coins on a scale unrivaled by Clark, Gruber & Company.

In 1862, legislation was past to establish a branch mint in Denver, and in March, 1863, the Denver building was sold to the US government for \$25,000. The building was planned to become the Denver Mint. Unfortunately, the U.S. decided to have the

building serve only as an Assay Office until it closed in 1906 when the new Denver Mint opened. Clark, Gruber & Company set up another bank in Denver where they molded ingots, but they never again minted coins. By the time Clark, Gruber & Company sold their original building, the company had put about one million dollars in gold coin and ingots into circulation in Colorado, so the coins would have been common in the pokes of miners and prospectors.

Coinage made buying and selling things much easier and quicker, however there were still plenty of instances where a prospector would have to pay for things with gold dust. In order to do this, a gold balance and weight set would be needed. There were a variety of weight sets that people used. Usually the weights would be based on ounces, but weight sets based on the gram (usually carried by foreigners) were not unusual.

Although it could certainly be expanded upon, the

list of prospector necessities that were carried in the pocket ends about here. The remaining things that could be found in the pockets of a prospector would be odds and ends, luxuries, and mementos. One of the most common of these mementos would be a picture of a loved one. By the time of the Pike's Peak Gold Rush, photography had reached a point where it was

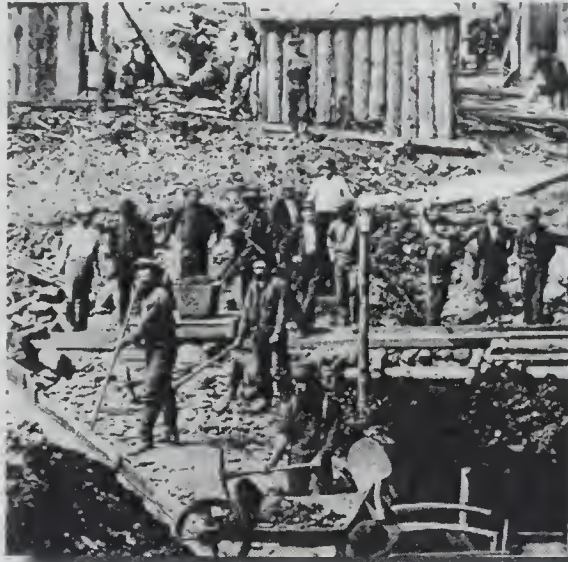
affordable for average people to get their picture taken. Often times, these photos would be mounted in small, pocket sized frames so they could easily be carried around. Similar to photos, love tokens would be given to prospectors from their loved ones back east.

Correspondence with loved ones was of major importance to many prospectors, and one of the first things many prospectors did when they returned to town would be to check the post office to see if they had mail. And once letters

were read they were not simply thrown out. Letters were treasured and carried around for months or put someplace safe.

Besides seeing if they had any mail, prospectors in town usually would stop by the dance hall or a bar to have a few drinks. In town, whisky was relatively available, although it was expensive. Once they'd had their fill at the bar, many prospectors opted to take some whiskey for the road, literally. Whiskey flasks and whiskey itself was one of the most common luxuries. It was not only used for pleasure and relaxation, but it was also believed that whiskey was an antidote for snake bites. Whiskey was also used to trade to other prospectors you found on the trail or to Native Americans.

Similar to whiskey, many prospectors carried with them a supply of tobacco along with a pipe. After a hard day of work many prospectors wanted nothing more than to sit down with a book (very commonly



Mining Crew Drifting for Gold



a pocket sized version of the bible or a guidebook on prospecting techniques) and have a smoke. Prospecting guidebooks were something that many eager gold-seekers invested in, however most of these books were very unreliable and contained totally fictitious information. Some of the reports in these prospecting guidebooks are so outrageously and obviously made up that it is comedic. For example, one book claimed that someone could obtain a large quantity of gold by climbing to the summit of Pike's Peak, cutting down four large trees, lashing them together into a raft like structure using iron straps, and pushing it down the slope of the mountain. The iron straps would appar-

ently peel gold off the mountainside that could then be collected. There are several things that are blatantly incorrect about this story. First of all, the summit of Pike's Peak is several thousand feet above the tree line.

Second, the gold fields were not actually near Pike's Peak, but actually about 90 miles south. Third, the dense vegetation on the sub-tree line portions of Pike's Peak could, by no means, be pushed through by a large wooden raft. Ultimately, most of these guidebooks were so misleading and utterly false that they were simply thrown away.

Although it is not a major issue nowadays, counterfeit coins were of big concern to people during the late 1850s and 1860s. Prospectors would carry a counterfeit coin detector to be sure that they would not get swindled out of their hard earned cash. Surprisingly, there was a broad spectrum of different counterfeit coin detectors that a miner could choose from. Although each model had a different shape, size, or special feature, they all measured the weight and diameter

of a coin to insure authenticity. These counterfeit coin detectors could only be used for US currency, since the coins of Clark, Gruber & Company weighed differently from their corresponding American issues. Something that was by no means essential, but every prospector wanted to have was a mining claim certificate. Many prospectors carried these, signifying they had found an area they considered rich enough to stake a claim on. Ultimately, when a prospector acquired a claim certificate it meant that they were no longer, by definition, a prospector. They would settle down and start mining a single piece of ground, or they could sell the claim and make some quick money.



Empire Tunnel, Colorado

Whether it be the destitute beggar, or the wealthy prospector who has struck it rich, you can tell what their life is like by inspecting their pockets. The Pikes Peak Gold Rush had its share of ambitious prospectors who ventured beyond the known gold fields to discover gold in other states and regions. These prospectors are the discoverers of gold and silver fields in Utah, Nevada, the

Black Hills, New Mexico, Arizona, Wyoming, Cripple Creek, etc. The list could go for pages. Sure... you can read books about these prospectors and their adventures. but there is no better way to learn about their lives better than to see the tools they carried and used daily, the tools you would find in the pockets of a Pikes Peak prospector.

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# A Letter from the Colorado Mines

The Colorado Gold Rush as described by the miners

By S.P.P.N. Life Member, Charlie Black

On May 6, 1859, John H. Gregory, a miner from Georgia, discovered gold in Gregory Gulch, one of the first major gold discoveries in the Colorado mountains; Gregory Gulch was located in Gilpin County, Colorado, approximately thirty-five miles west of Denver. John H. Gregory uncovered almost \$1,000 of placer gold within a matter of days, shortly thereafter

sold his claim for \$21,000, and promptly returned to Georgia. By September of 1859 approximately nine hundred miners were extracting about \$50,000 of gold per week in the area of Gregory's discovery.

By the summer of 1860 several towns had been established in the area surrounding Gregory Gulch, the most prominent of which was Central City. Within a few years Central City had attracted several thousand people and had been proclaimed "The Richest Square Mile on Earth." By then Central City was the largest city in Colorado and rivaled Denver as a possible capital of the territory.

Although Central City had its share of miners, gamblers, and prostitutes as was typical of other American mining towns, a significant number of "elegant and respectable" hotels, theatres, and churches were built.



Colorado Miners coming out of shaft

Following depletion of placer mining in the mid-1860's, gold output surged in the 1870's with the development of new techniques for separating gold from rock and continued during the remainder of the nineteenth century.

In the attached letter dated November 24, 1866, W.S. Gray wrote his friend, C. Bradford, to update him on hard rock mining and mutual friends' activities in the Central City area

since his earlier departure. From his letter it is evident that 1866 was

a transition year from a gold mining standpoint as placer mining had played out and hard rock mining was in its infancy. One of the more interesting aspects of W.S. Gray's letter is contained in the postscript and describes a serious underground mining accident at the Smith and Parmalee mine from which he fortunately escaped unharmed.

The "translation" of the full text of the letter is attached for your reading pleasure. A copy of the letter may be requested through the Editor of The Brasher Bulletin.

Central City Colorado

Nov. 24th '66

Ceplaion Bradford



My dear friend, this evening I had the pleasure of reading a truly interesting letter from you, to friend Wimen. I was indeed much pleased to hear from you through his letter, and that you arrived safe and sound to your home I presume the sight of a locomotive made you think of civilization once more and that you were in a country where hostile indians do not exist and ham and "state eggs" are in abundance. I think you are in luck. I hardly know what to write about that will be of any interest to you. As for Colorado and the Conner House, they are still in existence but sorry to say in not a very flourishing condition, at least the former. "You Bet" times are so dull as they well can be and not much doing, but we still hope that something will soon "break," that will make times more lively and burst the monotony we are compelled to lead in this isolated country, and give no "RoA" Miners something to hope for, if nothing more. But I must confess although times are dull there is yet hope for Colorado, and it is thought by a great many that the coming summer will see Colorado all "OK" ready for any emergency that may arise God speed her. Money matters, and times generally are better than awhile back. There are several stamp mills running, and those that are running are doing a good business. there is more gold shipped east at the present time than there has been since I came to the Territory. I presume you have heard this of the large retort taken out of the...

## 2nd

...Smith & Parmlee mine in a month's Belden agent he run a hundred stamps besides Keath's mill. The amalgam weighed three hundred and seventy-five pounds

before retorted. the retort weighed one hundred and fourteen pounds. It is the largest ever made in the Territory won't that make some of those Wall Street Brokers bug out their eyes. "Oh know I guess not" It was on exhibition for some time at the bank. It was shipped last Monday. The Grannell is still running and doing well -- ---- averaging her one hundred & eighty owners every six days. Also seven and eleven on the Gregory have shut down, also the Briggs, the C & T, up Nevada Gulch run for some time, but would not pay. They also have suspended and C & T stands there "obscure and alone." The monument of industry that you erected stands as you left it no one to "molest it or make it afraid" with her not very ---- tall ---- pipes looming up above the roof. Aught not --- ----- -- ten thousand "RA Minners" arise and kick Crosby & Thomson out of Colorado and their infernal humbug Lyon is still running his smelters but with what success I cannot say. Carpenter is not at present doing anything. Neither his process will prove successful is more than I can say but to tell the truth I have no faith in it whatever, and believe that the Stamps and Keath process are the only ones that are worth a damned. Watson is meeting with good success at Georgetown working on Silver oer. Several other capitolists have invested largely in building Smelters and developing the mines of Argentine. He-Wolson-taken from sixteen hundred pounds of silver oer \$500 in silver, it was very nice...



Colorado Mining Crew

## 3rd

...and it is thought that Argentine will yes---be the place. Last week a large mill in Ward District just completed was destroyed by fire I think it was a Keath process. The loss was very heavy. Mr Rollins, I believe was the agent. It was said to be the best machinery in



the Territory. There is not now, to my knowledge a C & T in the mountains, and God forbid there ever should. Several Companies that have been laying idle for the past year are making preparations to start next month.

Colorado may come out all right but sometimes I have my fears the gold is here with doubt and plenty of good mines that would pay that are now idle providing there were men to work them properly and work for the intrest of the Company. But you know that a great many of the agents in this country, in fact the majority their ides do not go beyond a fast horse a brass spur and a good suit of clothes, and some of them have not got enough sound judgment to superintend the digging of a privy hole let alone a mine. How can this country be successful when there is such loose management and then because mines will not pay a dividend and support, and enrich a dozen 'boomers' why the Company comes to the conclusion that the country is a humbug and they have been swindled. I have no doubt but what there are Companies in New York and Boston that own mining property in this country that have expended a large amount of capital and have acomplished nothing and their stock is not worth a tinker's d-d, and they have dropped the thing with disgust while at the same time, the mines are good and would pay a dividend

#### 4th

providing they were worked properly. But should the crevices prove to be almost solid Gold the Company would be no better off, for the more gold the mine produces, that more reckless and expensive she must run if they would only get such men as Fitzpatrick a man whom is a practical miner as well as a man of good judgment. I think Colorado would soon sing a differ-

ent song and it is my opinion that Colorado will never be prosperous until capitalists will pay more attention to their investments and get men who know something beyond a "cock tail" to work and manage them.

We are having beautiful weather at present although yesterday the wind got on one of its favorite sprees and made gravel fly right lively and was an excellent day to speculate on ankles. and as A Nord says, such scenes makes a person think of that song which says "I say her but a moment" but today it is very pleasant. There has been but very little snow this fall, health good potatoes cheap and calico on the rig bord from \$10 to \$18 per week wages from \$4.00 to \$5.00 per day but work scarce. I must inform you that "Bachelor's Retreat" is no more, that happy family (let me drop a tear) is no more, they are scattered as the lone Indian says "the clouds are scattering and so are my people,"



Miners, Near Central City

and so are the inmates of "Bachelor's Retreat." John B has gone to Arizonia. I have not heard from him since he left. Col Hare can occasionally be seen walking the principles

streets of our would be important city. cane in hand cigar between his fingers his head thrown back several degrees trying to look over his pattent eys. Court has been in session for some time

#### 5th

and it is said will adjourn the coming Saturday. Col



Hare's case with Worrell came off this court. Hare got judgment Worrell is going to appeal to higher tribunels. Dr Hooper departed this life a few days ago. It is said his sickness was brought on from greif over Holly's plaything. The field is now open to the invincible Holly, and he can sprung her down at leisure and clip as many curls as he chooses without the fear of being molested. Let him rip. Such is life in Colorado.

Central has improved a great deal since you left. The Congregationalists have built a splendid church on Lawrence street, and several other new buildings have been erected with help. The looks of our city. You seem to long for Colorado, and Conner House beef steak also I presume," and seem to think "stick to the mountains." Well there is not much danger of us leaving for the simple reason we c-a-n-t but give no some Lincoln guns" and see how quick we will show Colorado our shirt tail. "Oh! know I guess not" "one of Pat Kasey's right hands" "other some ducks not us" I presume you will be bored with such a long letter, and for fear ---- I will venture no farther, hoping to hear from you as soon as convenient I remain your true Friend

W S Grey  
Central City  
Colorado Territory  
Box 158

I wrote this in Chas. Post's office he sends you his kinde from Boston, send him one regards he says he would love to have som mushaway or imported

6th

When I closed my letter I thought I was through and

had told you all the news. There is one item however. I forgot to mention concerning a blasting that happened on last Saturday evening in the Smith and Parmlee mine. I was on the "night shift" we went under ground at 5 o'clock. when we got to the bottom one of the men whom were working on one of the slopes took a pick and comenced looking for a place to put "his hole" after picking for a few moments he struck a hole that looked as if --- ---- it was too strong and "blew "tamping" The boys picked up a drill -- and commenced to drill "out the hole" as the hole was full of fine iron. I was standing in about two or three feet of the stope that the men were working on, & after they had worked a few moments, I stepped about 8 or 9 ft. a little angling of then against the "hanging wall" when standing my head went above a "drill" I being at the end of the drill, I took some dispatch paper to write a dispatch for some sharp drills. Just as I stooped and placed my pencil on the paper away went a blast at the time I could not tell where, rock flew all around me, the drill struck the stull timber just above me, and then glanced and went to the



Mines of Central City

shaft about 70 ft. wreaking the drill into should I have been standing the drill would have struck my head at the time I hardly knew how to act men were groaning around me our lights were all out the blast putting them out I instantly struck a light at my feet lay a man -- -with the blood gushing from his face and a little to the left of me lay another and close to the edge of the stope were another

suffice to say the men were not killed but blind foreafer I come off unharmed the third man was walking over the stope at the time of the accident. It seems that the dayshift drilled the hole on the last gound two ft. and half and when they put the cartridge in it became falt and in trying to get it out drilled the first out then went

off and left it not saying anything about it consequently when we see it without any fuse the supposition was that it blew tamping, - -- and this caused three men to loose their eyesight. Henry Garbinah has been admitted to the bar as a layer of Colorado so he sends you his kinde regards, also Isaac Britton Please excuse so wearysome a letter. excuse bad writting, poor spelling and a poor letter generally but you know know who I am and what I am

W S Gray



Deadwood, Dakota Territory gold rush town 1876

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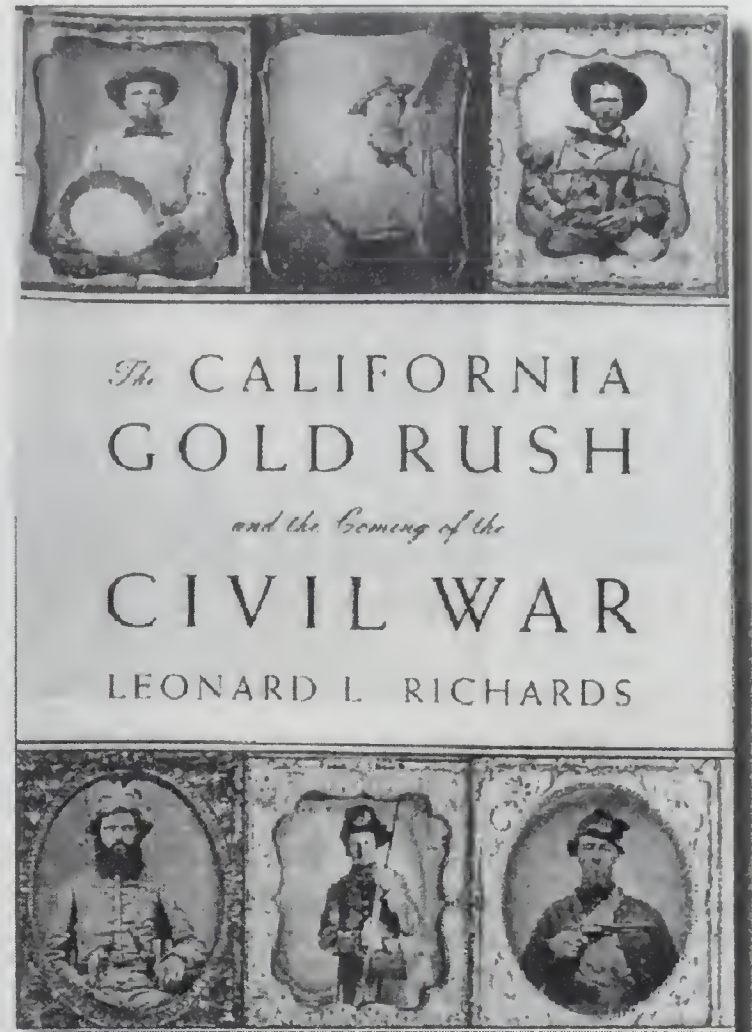
# Battle Over Slavery Came To California in Gold Rush Era

**Pro-southern Leadership Defied  
Population  
As Civil War loomed  
The California Gold  
Rush and the Coming of the Civil War**

By Leonard L. Richards  
KNOPF; 290 PAGES, \$25  
Reviewed by Joshua Spivak

When news broke of the discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill, people ranging from the poorest immigrants to top political leaders ran to America's newly captured territory, blinded by the potential for riches, with no great ideological, moral or ethical impulse pushing them to the end of the world. Yet politics pushed itself onto the scene. With the shadow of civil war looming over the country, the same problems that would later divide the country intruded on California's rush for riches - in ways that may be surprising for contemporary readers. California's political leadership was no progressive backer of the anti-slavery North. Instead, the loyalties of the eventual state's leadership were very much undecided.

Using one of the most famous duels in American history as a jumping-off point, Leonard Richards, in his clear, concise and engrossing work "The California Gold Rush and the Coming of the Civil War," takes a look at both the population flood that turned California into a state in 1850 and the battle for slavery that Southern supporters were waging in America in the same era. Richards, a Pulitzer Prize finalist for his biography of the congressional career of John Quincy Adams, shows how these two seemingly disparate events intersected,



while providing a readable study of the growth of the mining industry and the political founding of the state. He examines the political leanings of the antebellum leaders of California, who were as reliable a group of congressional allies as the increasingly militaristic South could have hoped for. As the majority of the state's population appeared to be virulently anti-slavery, the fact that congressional leaders were pro-Southern should be a surprise. Richards anecdotally shows this anti-slavery sentiment, a position rooted not just in ideology but also in the basic fear of competition. The miners had no interest in competing with either slaves or free blacks for work. Some members of the anti-slavery movement were also pushing for a law banning all blacks from the state. But despite the strong position of the miners, which Richards never quantifies, the political power in the state quickly fell into the hands of the Southern sympathizers, known as the Chivs (for Chiv-

alry faction in the California Democratic Party).

The real question in the book is never explicitly answered: How did the Chivs gain and hold political power in a state supposedly full of anti-slavery men? Although Richards does not give a direct explanation, he does show two major interrelated causes. One is fairly basic: Their members were already well schooled in politics. The leader of the Chivs, one of California's two original senators, William Gwin, could have been one of the only men to enter the state with power, and not gold, in his eyes. A former congressman who failed to gain a Senate seat in his native Mississippi, Gwin came West with the express intent of putting California into the Union, and himself into the upper house

of Congress. Gwitt, like most Chivs, was willing to pay the price of backing a ban on slavery in the state to get back into power. But once in Washington, he was sure to support the South. Richards properly focuses more on the other cause that helped the Chivs maintain power. Unsurprisingly, it is not ideology.

Instead, Gwin used his job as senator - for a session he was the state's only senator - to control all federal patronage in the state. With the acquiescence of sympathetic - Democratic presidents, Gwin helped fill the ranks of state government officials with his proslavery compatriots, and built up a powerful political organization-. Throughout the turbulent 1850s, the Chiv branch of the Democratic Party was generally the strongest party in the state, beating back a strong temporary challenge from the nativist, antislavery Know-Nothing party. However, a powerful force grew in San Francisco to challenge the Chivs hegemony. This force, built from within the dominant Democratic Party, was an organization led by David Broderick, a former Tammany Hall leader turned California senator. Broderick's death, in his famous 1859 duel with David Terry, the

militant pro-Southern former chief justice of the California Supreme Court, bookends the work. The duel was shrouded in politics. Broderick's followers believed that the Chivs wanted to divide the state in half, making the southern half a slave state, a position many had feared since the state was captured.

Because of the secondary role California played in the national drama, the book has a dual focus. There are well-crafted chapters detailing the Gold Rush, including how miners operated; details on the many routes people took to get to California, and on the debates over where to put a national railroad, all spiced with short vignettes on a number of crucial if relatively unknown figures in California history. Other chapters fill in the larger picture of



From "The California Gold Rush and the Coming of the Civil War"

the national battle, explaining the congressional wars that led to the Compromise of 1850 and the attempt by Southerners (and some Californians) to capture Mexico and smaller Latin American countries. Though Richards works to tie all the strands to the larger narrative of California. Some of these chapters seem a little off the topic. But this is a quibble with an otherwise strong and interesting work. Once gold was discovered in California, the state became the global destination for fortune seekers. At a different time, many of the political issues that engulfed the state would have been subsumed by gold lust. But slavery was too powerful a national issue not to have a major effect on California politics. Richards does a fine job portraying the men, events and personalities that fueled those politics in the years before the Civil War. Joshua Spivak is a Berkeley media consultant and attorney.



# Noted Philanthropist, Oilman, Collector Frederick Mayer Dies

Owner of finest Colorado Gold Coin Collection  
Coinworld, March 12, 2007

*Editor's Note: I knew Frederick well, ever since he acquired the complete sets of Parsons & Co. and Conway & Co. gold coins from the Kagin Collection. He was a gracious and generous man who readily opened his home and collections for viewing by numismatic enthusiasts. He will be missed.*

Collector, philanthropist and oilman Frederick R. Mayer died Feb. 14 in Denver.

Mr. Mayer, 79, was a life member of the American Numismatic Association. He was also a member and contributor to the American Numismatic Society where examples from his various collections appeared in loan exhibits, writes Richard C. Frajola in an obituary sent to Coin World.

"A true renaissance man who had vast knowledge in many areas, he was able to communicate his ideas, thoughts and visions concisely and with ease," Frajola writes. "His passion for collecting was contagious. It didn't matter if he was relating a recent find of an inexpensive variety or a treasure, he enjoyed the hunt as well as the discussion equally."

Mr. Mayer had several active collections of coins and paper money including Colorado pioneer gold coins and Colorado national bank notes, Frajola writes. Mayer's coin collection includes more than 80 coins, patterns and ingots from pre-statehood Colorado (1876).

The collection includes a complete set of pieces from all four mints who produced patterns or coinage between 1860 and 1863 – Denver City Assay Office (patterns only), Clark, Gruber & Co., J.J. Conway and John Parsons. Highlights include the only 1861 J.J.

Conway gold \$10 piece not in a museum. It was found in the ruins of a building near Fort Union, N.M., according to Lawrence J. Lee, who previously served three years as curator to the collection.

The only two other examples known are in the na-



Frederick Mayer

tional numismatic collection at the Smithsonian institution. Interests in paper money included colonial-era New Hampshire notes and the first 1861 confederate issues.

"As with all his collections, he put equal weight on both completeness and quality. The collection contains several unique pieces and a number of territorial notes. It is one of the largest holdings of Colorado nationals known, even though it was a work in progress," Frajola writes.

Mr. Mayer was a benefactor to the numismatic community. In 2006 he donated \$20,000 to the Gallery Mint Museum to be used as seed money to help finance publication of a book on minters and assayers of the Colorado territory.

An obituary in the Rocky Mountain News states that in 2000, Mr. Mayer recalled the beginning of his collecting days when he and his wife, Jan, attended gallery openings in Dallas and took a delayed honeymoon in Paris before plunging full force into amassing the work they loved.

His advice in 2000 to other potential collectors was to just do it: Potential collectors "all seem so afraid," Mayer said. "I see people afraid to buy the first painting. They're afraid of what their friends will think of them. Do something. Don't just stand there." Mr.

Mayer's collections also included Costa Rican pre-Columbian artifacts, Spanish Colonial paintings and contemporary art.

Mr. Mayer was born in Youngstown, Ohio in 1928. He graduated from Philips Exeter Academy in 1945 and Yale University in 1950. He then joined the United States Army Engineers, with the rank of sergeant first class. A few years later, he formed Exeter Drilling Co., which he moved from Texas to the Denver-Julesburg Basin in 1964.

Mr. Mayer sold Exeter, the first of three companies he founded, in 1980 after watching it grow into the nation's largest privately held drilling company. He then founded F.R. Investments Co., and later Captiva Corp., where he served as chairman of the oil and gas exploration firm.

The family requested that donations be sent to the Family Resource Centers, 1653 Vine St., Denver, CO 80206 or the Denver Art Museum's development department, 414 14th St., Denver, CO 80202. cw

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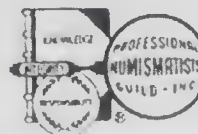
Pine Tree Shilling



\$50 Gold "Slug"

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# 1911 Alaska Gold Ingot

By Fred N. Holabird

This 1.4 troy ounce gold ingot is engraved as a first mill product for Oscar Carlson at Nome. It is one of the few (possibly only) surviving from the Alaska gold rush period. Gold was discovered in the beach sands of Nome in the late 1890's. Gold had been discovered near Dawson, Yukon Territory, just over the border from Alaska, just a few years before, leading to a "stampede to the Klondike" by thousands of prospectors and would-be miners hoping to strike it rich. The 1890's had been a depression over most of the United States. The massive mining output of cash produced from the mining of gold and silver in the western states had greatly slacked off, as ore deposits were thought to be mined out. The Cripple Creek discoveries were just gaining momentum, but there wasn't room for everybody, so when news of a great new strike came along in an exciting new region, everyone was off to the Klondike.

Skagway was the general starting point for miners, who head into the interior to the northwest and northeast. Their only access was through the rugged, steep, snow-bound Chilcoot Pass. To be allowed to get past there and on to the inland mining camps, Canadian Mounties stood guard. Each prospector was required to carry a ton of goods, an amount that was thought to be able to sustain them through the winter, necessitating many trips up and down the Chilcoot trail carrying load after load of goods.

In Nome, the gold in beach sand discovery was a Godsend. Imagine plenty of gold on the beach, right there for everyone to pick up. It was a prospector's "dream come true." As the sands were mined and mined, the gold gradually petered out, and prospectors

were forced to start exploring all the nearby creeks for gold. After more than ten years of good placer mining, a few lucky prospectors began to find lode gold deposits. The urgency for the search for native gold in quartz veins was brought about by the great gold discovery at the Treadwell mine near Juneau. Along with more lode or hard-rock prospectors, came immigrants and miners from Sweden, particularly to look at the gold and iron mines near Nome. Alaska gold deposits were rich, and between 1898 and 1914, \$68.4 million was produced; \$4 million alone in 1911.

One of these immigrants was Oscar Carlson, who came over from Sweden just before 1910. Oscar and his wife Christinan were just two of many Swedish miners in Nome in 1910. As a gold miner, Oscar prospected the quartz veins in the hills and mountains around Nome, looking for the source of all the placer gold. About 25 miles northwest of Nome, prospectors found some gold as well as promising iron deposits, according to Albert Brooks and others in *Mineral Resources of Alaska* in 1914 (1915).

A small custom quartz mill was built in Nome in 1911, with the idea that it could handle the production from the fifteen lode mines that had been located, one of which was Carlson's. Charles Of reported in *The Mineral Industry of 1912* (an AIME publication) that the mill was fed "from many pros-

pects which cannot yet be classed as productive mines." Gold was being produced everywhere, especially from gold dredges.

Carlson must have been one of the first to process a small batch of his probably high grade gold ore in the mill, and proudly engraved the resultant gold bar. Of got it right, and few of the small gold mines ever produced any tonnage. Carlson and his wife soon left the gold country, probably returning back to Sweden, where the comforts of home easily championed the harsh winter of Alaska.



Oscar Carlson and brother



# Suggested Reading List

**Gold Fever and The Art of Panning and Sluicing**  
by Lois DeLorenzo.

**The Making of a Hardrock Miner**  
by Steven Voynick.

A former lode miner offers a first person account of work in western mines. Includes the culture of mining, providing a rare glimpse of miners' attitudes and values

**Gold Prospector's Handbook**  
by Jack Black.

How to pan gold, prospect streams, geology, lode gold, sluices, portable dredges, etc.

**Growing Up in Pioneer America  
1800 to 1890**

Judith Pinkerton Josephson

**Placer Gold Deposits of The Sierra Nevada**  
Paul D. Morrison, ed.

A survey of California Sierra gold placer, hydraulic, and drift mines; also covers dredging areas of the American, Feather, and Yuba rivers. Maps locate gold districts and old mines from Kern County north to Plumas County

**The Autobiography of Charles Peters, in 1915 the  
Oldest Pioneer Living in California**

By Charles Peters

**Tombstone A.T. - A History of Early Mining, Milling and Mayhem**

By William B. Shillingberg  
First Edition

**Heather's Gold**

A story of a Pioneer Family in the Otago Gold Fields  
By Donald Offwood

**Pioneering The West  
1846 to 1878**

Major Howard Egan's Diary

**Perilous Passage- A Narrative of the Montana Gold  
Rush, 1862-1863**

By Edwin Ruthven Purple

**California Gold Country:  
Early Mining Days**

by Stanley W. Paher.

Stunning photos of the Mother Lode mining camps -- from Sycraville southward to Grass Valley, Auburn, Placerville, Columbia -- are arrayed among eleven 19th-century colored line sketches showing miners extracting gold, engaging in recreation, and transporting ore from the Mother Lode.

**Gold Rush**

A Literary Exploration

Edited by Michael Kowalewski

**Miners, Merchants, and Missionaries: The Roles of  
Missionaries and Pioneer Churches in the Colorado  
Gold Rush and Its Aftermath, 1858-1870**

by Alice Cowan Cochran

**Those Wild and Lusty Gold Camps**

By Alton Pryor

**Gem Trails of Northern California**

by James R. Mitchell.

Maps show roads to gem collecting sites with 1/10th mile accuracy; the text concentrates on gem fields north of Bishop and Fresno, but also includes some areas of western Nevada.

**Vigilante Days and Ways**

By Nathaniel P. Langford



# PIONEER'S TEN COMMANDMENTS



A man spake these words, and said: I am a miner, wandering "from away down east," to sojourn in a strange land. And behold I've seen the elephant, yea, verily, I saw him, and bear witness, that from the key of his trunk to the end of his tail, his whole body hath passed before me; and I followed him until his huge feet stood before a clapboard shanty; then with his trunk extended he pointed to a candle-card tacked upon a shingle, as though he would say Read, and I read ...

**I.** Thou shalt have no other claim than one.

**II.** Thou shalt not make unto thyself any false claim, nor any likeness to a mean man, by jumping one: for I, a miner, am a just one, and will visit the miners around about, and they will judge thee: and when they shall decide, thou shalt take thy pick, thy pan, thy shovel and thy blankets with all thou hast and shall depart seeking other good diggings, but thou shalt find none. Then when thou hast paid out all thy dust, worn out thy boots and garments so that there is nothing good about them but the pockets, and thy patience is like unto thy garments, then in sorrow shalt thou return to find thy claim worked out, and yet thou hath no pile to hide in the ground, or in the old boot beneath thy bunk, or in buckskin or in bottle beneath thy cabin, and at last thou shalt hire thy body out to make thy board and save thy bacon.

**III.** Thou shalt not go prospecting before thy claim gives out. Neither shalt thou take thy money, nor thy gold dust, nor thy good name, to the gaming table in vain: for monte, twenty-one, roulette, faro, lansquenet and poker, will prove to thee that the more thou puttest down the less thou shalt take up: and when thou thinkest of thy wife and children, thou shalt not hold thyself guiltless—but insane.

**IV.** Thou shalt not remember what thy friends do at home on the Sabbath day, lest the remembrance may not compare favorably with what thou doest here. Six days thou mayst dig or pick: but the other day is Sunday: yet thou washest all thy dirty shirts, darnest all thy stockings, tap thy boots, mend thy clothing, chop the whole week's firewood, make up and bake thy bread, and boil thy pork and beans, that thou wait not when thou returnest



from thy long-tom weary. For in six days' labor only though canst do it in six months; and though, and thy morals and thy conscience, be none the better for it; but reproach thee, shouldst thou ever return with thy worn-out body to thy mother's fireside.

**V.** Though shalt not think more of all thy gold, and how thou canst make it fastest, than how thou will enjoy it after thou hast ridden rough-shod over thy good old parents' precepts and examples, that thou mayest have nothing to reproach thee, when left ALONE in the land where thy father's blessing and thy mother's love hath sent thee.

**VI.** Thou shalt not kill; neither thy body by working in the rain, even though thou shalt make enough to buy physic and attendance with; nor thy neighbor's body in a duel, or in anger, for by "keeping cool," thou canst save his life and thy conscience. Neither shalt thou destroy thyself by getting "tight," nor "stewed," nor "high," nor "corned," nor "half-seas over," nor "three sheets in the wind," by drinking smoothing down—"brandy slings," "gin cocktails," "whiskey punches," "rum toddies," nor "egg-noggs." Neither shalt thou suck "mint juleps," nor "sherry-cobblers," through a straw, nor gurgle from a bottle the "raw material," nor take "it straight" from a decanter; for, while thou art swallowing down thy purse, and the coat from off thy back thou art burning the coat from off thy stomach; and if thou couldst see the houses and lands, and gold dust, and home comforts already lying there—"a huge pile"—thou shouldst feel a choking in thy throat; and when to that thou addest thy crooked walkings thou wilt feel disgusted with thyself, and inquire "Is thy servant a dog that he doeth these things!" Verily, thou shalt say, "Farewell, old bottle, I will kiss thy gurgling lips no more; slings, cocktails, punches, smashes, cobblers, noggs, toddies, sangarees and juleps, forever farewell. Thy remembrance shames one; henceforth, I cut thy acquaintance, and headaches, tremblings, heart-burnings, blue devils, and all the unholy catalogue of evils that follow in thy train. My wife's smiles and my children's merry-hearted laugh, shall charm and reward me for having the manly firmness and courage to say NO. I wish thee an eternal farewell."

**VII.** Thou shalt not grow discouraged, nor think of going home before thou hast made thy "pile," because thou hast not "struck a lead," nor found a "rich crevice," nor sunk a hole upon a "pocket," lest in going home thou shalt leave four dollars a day, and going to work, ashamed, at fifty cents, and serve thee right; for thou knowest by staying here, thou mightst strike a lead and fifty dollars a day, and keep thy manly self respect, and then go home with enough to make thyself and others happy.

**VIII.** Thou shalt not steal a pick, or a shovel, or a pan from thy fellow-miner; nor take away his tools without

his leave; nor borrow those he cannot spare; nor return them broken, nor trouble him to fetch them back again, nor talk with him while his water rent is running on, nor remove his stake to enlarge thy claim, nor undermine his bank in following a lead, nor pan out gold from his "riffle box," nor wash the "tailings" from his sluice's mouth. Neither shalt thou pick out specimens from the company's pan to put them in thy mouth or pocket; nor cheat thy partner of his share; nor steal from thy cabin-mate his gold dust, to add to thine, for he will be sure to discover what thou hast done, and will straightaway call his fellow miners together, and if the law hinder them not, will hang thee, or give thy fifty lashes, or shave thy head and brand thee, like a horse thief, with "R" upon thy cheek, to be known and read of all men, Californians in particular.

**IX.** Thou shalt not tell any false tales about "good diggings in the mountains," to thy neighbor that thou mayest benefit a friend who had mules, and provisions, and tools and blankets he cannot sell,—lest in deceiving thy neighbor, when he returneth through the snow, with naught save his rifle, he present thee with the contents thereof, and like a dog, thou shalt fall down and die.

**X.** Thou shalt not commit unsuitable matrimony, nor covet "single blessedness;" nor forget absent maidens; nor neglect thy "first love;"—but thou shalt consider how faithfully and patiently she awaiteth thy return; yea and covereth each epistle that thou sendest with kisses of kindly welcome—until she hath thyself. Neither shalt thou cove thy neighbor's wife, nor trifle with the affections of his daughter; yet, if thy heart be free, and thou dost love and covet each other, thou shalt "pop the question" like a man.

A new Commandment give I unto thee—if thou has a wife and little ones, that thou lovest dearer than life,—that thou keep them continually before thee, to cheer and urge thee onward, until thou canst say, "I have enough—God bless them—I will return." Then from thy much-loved home, with open arms shall thy come forth to welcome thee, with weeping tears of unutterable joy that thou art come; then in the fullness of thy heart's gratitude, thou shalt kneel together before thy Heavenly Father, to thank him for thy safe return. AMEN—So mote it be.

#### FORTY-NINER.

*These "commandments" were actually written in 1853 by James M. Hutchings (1818-1902), and first published in the Placerville Herald newspaper. This was the most popular of the hundreds of letter sheets published in the 1850-1870 era, and was so profitable for Mr. Hutchings that he was able to publish the successful Hutchings's California Magazine.*



## A 22-POUND GOLD NUGGET.

**FOUND AT THE REED MINE IN NO. 9  
LAST THURSDAY.**

**Mr. J. L. Shinn the Lucky Finder---Descrip-  
tion of the Find, and Other History  
of This Famous Mine.**

A Compilation of Don Baumgart's Stories

Miners suffered from a range of diseases and disorders including scurvy, rheumatism, dysentery, fever, undernourishment, typhoid, smallpox, cholera, scarlet fever, meningitis and Silicosis.

Today the U.S. produces more than \$2 billion in gold- the estimated value of all Gold Rush riches- annually, and seven percent of that goes in people's mouths.

A pioneer's journal told of their first dinner, "Our first meal was cooked by us. None of us knew how to cook. We had coffee blacker than burnt molasses; pork drippings with salt, ashes and grease: bread a bullet couldn't pierce..."

**Transportation of water was a feat in most towns. Come spring and the opening of the roads, 12-mule-team wagons trucked ice to Marysville where residents used 18,000 pounds of ice a day during the summer. The Little Grass Valley ice operation was fancifully called Jacob Toomb's Great Mountain Ice Manufactory.**

The greatest danger faced by those living in the new Western towns was fire. Made of canvas and wood, the towns were easy prey. One notable fire took Grass Valley one night in 1855, burning 300 buildings with an estimated loss of \$400,000.

**One miner's journal illustrates pastime of the pioneers, "Christmas Eve went to Cris's store, got playing cards and won nine times, the 10th I got stuck for a dollar. Drank apple toddy & eat herrings & cakes."**

In 1848, \$245,301 worth of gold came out of the ground. The following year, the take jumped to \$10 million- an increase of more than 40% in one year.

When gold was discovered, California had two newspapers and they both missed the big story.

Back home, *The Star* and the *Californian* both became victims of the exodus to the gold fields, losing pressmen, advertisers and subscribers. In May and June of 1848 both papers folded.

Women were only a tiny fraction of the population. Susan Lamella and Hank Meals -- in their book *Yuba Trails* -- report miners were so starved for the presence of a woman that in 1850 Jenny Lind was offered 3,000 ounces of gold to sing in San Francisco. At \$18 an ounce, her one-performance fee was \$54,000!



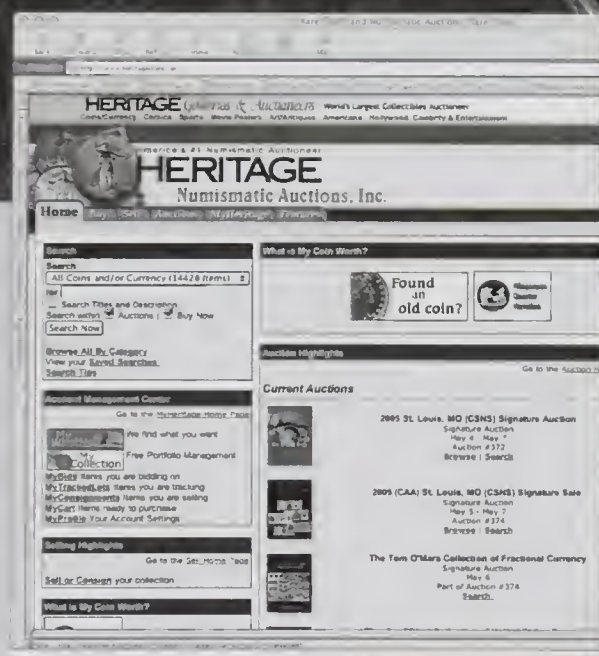






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